

AN ARCHÆOLOGIST ON ARCHÆOLOGY.*

THE deposits of time and of a former race, whether of the elegant Etruscan race or the huge fossil skeleton, are gathered up by the palm of the archæologist, and history marks their records with notes of admiration! Mere admiration, however, is not his legitimate object,—his desire, on the discovery of a fresh novelty, being to compare the products of a remote age with those of the current era, and thus to mark the progress of art, of knowledge, of civilisation, and refinement.

A very slender signet ring, found in one of the vaults at Stanford Bury derives an interest from the mere conjecture that it may be one of those "light summer rings" alluded to by Juvenal when lashing the effeminacy of the dandies of Rome, the great satirist little dreaming the day would come when the barbarian, the future dandy of Britain, would, in his own sole person, wed effeminacy to a beard? Thanks to the poets of antiquity, we can glean from them the minutia of the manners of a people: through the smiles of a Horace or the frowns of a Juvenal we trace the ridiculous or the flagitious of the era in which they flourished. History gives the *generale*, but satire the *personnel* of every period: without the censures of a Juvenal we could never have dreamed of the degree of effeminacy of the men or the masculinity of the Roman women, and, trifling as such objects may appear, they contribute to the agreeable variety of archæological pursuit. The time has arrived when those most ignorant of its utility will accord its value, when semi-barbarism chuckling with conceit, shall no longer pronounce the antiquary

"the slave of whites,
Thanking his stars he's not a fool like him."

Is it nothing to explore the solitudes of the six and twenty cities and temples and ruins of central America? To translate the hieroglyphics of its walls and pyramids, to prove from its altars that its living children were worshippers of their living god, the Sun? That they were the pledge of prophecy, the gleanings of Tyre, saved from the slaughter of a demonic king?

These cities had long lumbered under the black mould of oblivion, till the step of the antiquary startled their silence, and ere long their most valued treasures—the sculptures of their temples and their palaces,—shall record their histories on the walls of our British Museum. Already have the cities of Palenque, of Uxmal, Ocosingo and Copan, revealed much of their hidden knowledge. Some future adventurer from our shores, thirsting for more, shall

"With giant grasp fling back the folds of night,
And bring the buried fugitives to light."

It is from what has been we may augur of what will be:—the shadows of the past become the beams of prophecy,—

"Iris rays cast forward by old time,
Suoat glimmering o'er his dark abyss."

and man reads his future destiny where history hangs her records in Time's roofless temple! With such unerring guides for our judgment, may we not predict with certainty, the day will come when after the lapse of ages, the feet of the future antiquary (wearing with the search) may inquire on what spot stood the modern Babylon—London! The day shall come when the very shadow of Time's wings shall so often have kissed her burial, it shall sweep away the last lillock of the dust that marked her silent and capacious tomb! When we contemplate such events, who but must exclaim—"What in this world is permanent?" Even worlds themselves are but the fool of eternal change.

"Yea, Time shall feel this world's last shock."

See the race of the planets run;
Shall dash his glass in the molten rock
As it mingles with the sun!"

Every nation, every people, every city, shall become a subject for the antiquary:—the winds of desolation shall fill the ruins strewn over the once living masses, sighing sad epitaphs to the feast of death!

What profound sensations do not such reflections awaken in the breast of the antiquary and

the philosopher, who glancing down the backward path of time link the past with the present and the future!

"Look through the framework of a brighter sphere,
And read the solid mass we tread on here."

Honour then to the studies of archæology and to the spirit that fosters them! May the patrons of this society see deposited within these walls the reliquiae of remote ages, both natural and artificial, and may the literati—the *dile* of the county—come here to behold and contemplate in their specimens the wonders of God and the knowledge of man!

ARRANGEMENT OF HOUSES TO PREVENT FIRE.

MR. EDITOR.—We have long been promised, and are anxiously looking forward to, Lord Morpeth's amended Metropolitan Buildings Bill; and from the patience exhibited by his lordship in carrying through the Health of Towns Bill, we may confidently anticipate not only another Act, but a really amended Act. But while we are full of hope, let us not forget the old story of the showman, who proclaimed to a wondering crowd that his caravan contained two most astonishing curiosities,—the one a sea-horse, and the other a "wusser,"—and how the eager visitors, having disposed of the former, impatiently sought a peep at the more wonderful and mysterious part of the exhibition, the "wusser;" and how, at length, they descended from the caravan after being favoured with a sight of a smaller animal of the same genus as the former, and which the showman, with much seeming simplicity, informed his patrons must, by reason of its inferiority to the former, be a "wusser," or, in more genteel and grammatical phrase, a "worse one." We are all acquainted with the Act now in force; let us hope that we shall not be surprised by a "wusser." We would rather hope, however, that when the Bill comes before the public, it will be such a Bill as, whilst it shall impose no unnecessary restrictions, will, at the same time, fully secure for us all the proper objects of a Metropolitan Buildings Act—viz., ample security (in every sense) to individuals as well as to the public, against fire, and, to a reasonable extent, the aids to the promotion of health. Let us hope, too, that there will be no difficulty, uncertainty, or tediousness, in enforcing a strict observance of all the provisions of the Act in behalf of these objects.

These few remarks are, however, only preliminary to one or two humble suggestions of a practical nature, which I am desirous to put forward, for the consideration of the parties interested, or to be intrusted, with the preparation of the Bill. I consider, and I have no doubt that you, Mr. Editor, will agree with me, that for this huge metropolis, looking at the number of its inhabitants, and the ways and means had recourse to by a large proportion of them to ensure a place of habitation, and looking also at the lamentable daily accounts of the destruction of life and property,—any Act of Parliament for the "prevention of mischief by fire," should have, for one of its grandest objects, the prevention of the spread of fire from apartment to apartment, and from floor to floor, in dwelling-houses. I am aware of the importance of bearing in mind that there is a market price for buildings; but no large reform or improvement can ever be effected without seeming, for the moment, to do some little violence to parties interested in the then present state of things. As regards buildings, however, I think I may say that any violence which I shall propose would be only imaginary, as legislative improvements in buildings would meet with an early and ready remunerative acknowledgment; for where is the occupier of a house who would hesitate to pay a merely nominal tax, for the advantage of having a house so built as to ensure the safety not only of its contents, but also of the lives of its inmates.

But to come immediately to my object. I have to propose that, in the erection of dwelling-houses, no open timber floors, ceilings, or partitions, be admitted, as it is well known that fire, without draft to assist it, is not a dangerously destructive element, but that, with this ally, there is no limit to the range of its greedy and devouring appetite. I would

therefore insist that all internal partitions be composed either entirely of brickwork, or of brick nogging or pugging; that the floors, if not composed entirely of fire-proof materials, should, in like manner, be filled in solid with some incombustible materials; and that the stairs, if not of stone (which they might be without any great increase of expense), should be (that is, the steps and risers) fixed upon some solid and almost wholly incombustible material, the construction of which might follow that adopted for the floors. So far these suggestions have reference only to the prevention of the spread of fire, but probably some further regard should be had to the stability of the building in case of fire arising. By the existing law fourth-rate buildings may be built with one brick party wall, but no timbers may be laid endwise into any party wall within 4 inches of its centre, and thus fourth-rate houses may be built without any material structural assistance being derived from or given to the party wall on either of its sides, except, at last, by placing the timbers on curbs or shoes. To remedy this, I would propose that substantially no party wall should be less in thickness than one brick and a half, and this could be effected by one-fourth only of the wall being of this thickness. The result of this would be to afford, to some extent, better means of connecting the floors and partitions, &c., with each of the four walls of the building, instead of throwing nearly the whole duty on the front and back walls, and increasing the liability, in case of fire, of the whole of the internal construction of the building falling in on being deprived of their support in any lower story of the building.

I trust I have made myself sufficiently understood, without entering into any details of the construction—a point, indeed, which I have avoided, as I am aware that others before me have already made public their view on the subject of fire-proof construction in connecting with domestic architecture; but before concluding I must venture to suggest for consideration whether the rules of the Buildings Act, regulating stairs and access, might not be transposed so far as they are made to apply to particular classes of building,—that is to say, that hereafter dwelling-houses should be required to have such appendages of fire-proof materials, whilst for public buildings, such as schools for day instruction, churches, chapels, &c., wooden stairs, if desired, should be allowed, a reservation, however, being made in respect of hospitals, colleges, and all other buildings occupied by night (as well as by day) as dwellings, so as to ensure ample protection to the occupants in cases of fire. There is also one matter more to which I would direct attention, and that is the importance of requiring that in every dwelling ready means should be provided for escape, in case of fire, through or into the roof, whereby to obtain access to the roofs of the adjoining houses, or to the fire escapes or other source of safety: as a matter of course a ladder should always be in readiness as a means of ascent from the topmost floor.

ALFRED BRYAN.

P.S. The importance of the above remarks are confirmed, in my opinion, by the account of the late fire in the parish of Whitechapel, which was attended with a serious loss of life under more than ordinarily distressing circumstances—see the *Times* of the 15th inst.

EFFECT OF IVY ON MASONRY.

SIR.—In order to strengthen the opinion of those persons who assert that the growth of ivy upon the walls of churches causes a disruption of the masonry, I beg to communicate through the medium of your pages the following instance.

One of the angle buttresses of the south aisle of Stone Church, Kent, has one of its sides covered with ivy, the stem of which, between 2 and 3 inches in diameter, first makes its appearance at the top of the base of the buttress, at least 2 feet from the ground.

Here it has forced out one of the stones, and after showing its stem the height of the first quoin, it disappears in the buttress, and again emerges at the height of another quoin, crawling in its progress from the ground, a fissure in the masonry and brickwork of considerable extent.—I am, Sir, &c.

Gravesend.

ALFRED BRYAN.

* From an address by Mr. Inskip, read at the last meeting of the Bedfordshire Architectural Society, mentioned in our last number.